

**OCTOBER 2004**     *A Publication of the Mountaineering Club of Alaska*     **Volume 47 Issue 10**  
**Box 102037, Anchorage, Alaska 99510**

**ANNUAL MEETING**  
**Wednesday**  
**October 20, 7:30 pm**  
**First United Methodist Church**  
**9th & G Streets**  
 Next to the Phillips Building  
 (you may use marked parking after hours...)  
**Downtown Anchorage**

**Program: Climbing in the Wrangell-St. Elias Range, by Dave Hart.**

### Calendar

The MCA Alaskan Mountain Culture Calendar Photo Contest is a horizontal calendar again this year. Please have all your photos in an envelope with your name and phone number on it. Please submit only horizontal pictures taken in or around Alaska, that have not previously been published. The categories are **climbing, hiking, people, and scenery**. Only one entry in each category per person. They will be on the wall for everyone to vote on at the Annual Meeting, but please get them to me before that. For more details you can contact me at oinkmenow@hotmail.com or 337-5127. Please get your shots to me by Oct. 19. Stuart Grenier.



### TRIP REPORTS

#### Yogi's Den

by Willy Hersman



It was July 1992, the year we built it, that I last visited the hut we call Bock's Den. We had a group of seven people then, struggling in the alders to put together the pieces that had previously been dismantled at

John and Karen Cafmeyer's house. It was an unlikely location for a hut, but once a pilot sets down your first load, you are committed. I remember on the cloudy day we left, a black bear was staring down at the new shiny contraption, probably with intentions to check it out later that day. There were no game trails close by. When Keith Ross and I hiked in on this Labor Day weekend there was a game trail leading right to the hut, and we were still 75 yards away when we ran across a broken broom, not a good sign.

It was all too obvious when we reached the front door that there would be work to do. The front window was completely gone, just a frame. On the back wall the window had been boarded over by a previous group of visitors, on the ground the lantern, bite marks on the outside container. The wood facing below the roof had been bitten and torn off, and one edge of metal siding had been peeled away, screws ripped out in an abortive attempt to gain access.

We opened the door to find a cyclone event had taken place. All shelves had been emptied onto the floor, nearly all the insulation on the walls had been pulled off and chewed, much of it spit out on game trails around the hut. The Tyvek we had nailed inside the metal walls was hanging in strips like cobwebs. All the fuel cans had bite marks and were long evaporated of fuel. The cook pots were bitten and useless to hold water. Exposed nails had dark brown hair on them, especially near the window where Yogi had come and gone numerous times. There was no evidence that any food had been found and I still wonder with what motivation the beast might go eating foam insulation over and over, only to wretch up wads of it in the alders.

Apparently we had some leftover Tyvek on a large role, left from construction. It was found down one of the pathways with long tailings of unrolled Tyvek blowing in the breeze. I have a vision of Yogi, running down the trail with a new toy kite. The broom must have been carefully negotiated through the window as well, a valuable prize at first, but impractical to pull through the alders, finally snapping in two. The hut log was the oddest part. We had left a large hardbound journal in the new hut in 1992, about the size of Webster's Dictionary. Somehow Yogi had managed to rip out a few pages and tore them up, but only the pages with written entries! The remaining blank pages were still in tact. A statement perhaps: those people are not welcome, no matter how eloquently they write.

Although we planned to go climbing, Keith and I spent our free day cleaning up the mess, burning what we could. We put a new bear-proof cover on the front window with lots of menacing nails. I re-attached the metal siding and stashed the bitten cans. From the torn pages I estimate that the hut gets an average of one visit per year (from those who use a door to get in). Yogi had had his way with Bock's Den since the previous human visit in 2002. Do I recommend substantial hut renovation? No. I don't recommend replacing

the glass, the pots, the lantern, stove or the insulation. It's a half-way hut, a metal shell around a frame of donated lumber, with no amenities promised. It's still a safe refuge for weary travelers who underestimate the tedious glacier travel on the Matanuska. Leave it at that.

There were several journal entries telling how difficult it is to get off the ice to reach the hut. In three trips to the bench that it sits on, I have never had a difficult exit. You have to be patient and stay on the ice, even though you can see the shiny objective ahead. You might wait until you see Yogi, he was seen waving to us as we headed back to our car, hoping perhaps that we had left something more palatable than brooms, insulation and Tyvek.

## Flute Peak – Mountain of my Frustrations

by Steve Gruhn



Flute Peak (6634, Sec. 16, T12N, R1E, S.M.) rises up from the surrounding terrain like a giant exclamatory finger extended to the heavens and divides the South Fork of the Eagle River, Organ Creek, and North Fork of Ship Creek drainages. It has long piqued my interest as a potential climb and it has continually taunted me as I have admired its form from the Flute Glacier to the northwest, from Eagle Peak (6909) to the north, from Mount Ewe (6293) to the west, from Organ Mountain (6980) to the east, from the North Fork Ship Creek to the south, and from the mountains on the north side of the Eagle River Valley to the northeast.

I first attempted to climb it via the north ridge in August 1986. I didn't get within sight of the north ridge on that attempt. I tried again this April 30th with Willy Hersman, Keith Ross, and Larry Oliver. That attempt saw us defeated and turning around only 2 miles from the trailhead after floundering in bottomless rotten snow. Again, I did not even see Flute Peak.

I decided to lead a MCA trip to the peak to encourage me to attempt the climb again. On Friday, June 4th, I led Lee Whitten, Theo Hunt, Leslie Robbins, and Steve Humpal up the trail from the South Fork of the Eagle River trailhead, north of Eagle Lake, up the braided stream above the lake, and up the northeast side of the lower waterfall to



a camping site at the top of the waterfall where Keith Ross was already asleep waiting for us. I made sure to wake him so that he would be just as tired as the rest of us in the morning.

The next morning the six of us awoke at 5:00 and were hiking upstream by 5:40. We made it to the toe of the Flute Glacier in good time. But Keith and Leslie weren't feeling well, so they decided to return to the trailhead together. The four of us formed two rope teams and proceeded up the glacier. We decided to ascend the ridge between Acapella Point (5682) and Allegro (5876). We traveled up the snow slope to the ridge crest without too much difficulty, but once we stood atop the ridge we couldn't seem to find the reasonable way down to the Organ Glacier that Wayne Todd had described to me. We poked around a bit on the east side of Acapella Point, but the fated fickle finger of Flute was having its way with me again. We decided to abort the climb, turn around, and head for home, another attempt nullified. But this time I had been able to see the summit and it whetted my appetite for more.

So, on Friday evening, July 9th, Willy and I hiked up the trail to the flat area near the top of the lower waterfall and pitched my tent. Keith had hiked in earlier that day and Larry joined us sometime before we awoke the next morning. Our party from April had regrouped after allowing our bruised egos a couple months to heal. This time, though, the lack of snow would prove challenging for us. What a difference two months can make!

We awoke around 7:00 a.m. and were hiking up the valley to the glacier by about 8:00. We were able to hike up the glacier without roping, so we traveled quickly. Based on further information from Wayne, we chose to ascend the ridge at a saddle between Allegro and Flute Peak this time. The gully to the saddle was a steep scree slope and we chose to climb it one at a time to avoid rockfall. Willy was first and he warned us that there were several precariously perched boulders at the top of the slope. Keith and Larry went next and I was last. Trying to pull myself up over the lip of the gully, I inadvertently grabbed onto one of the precariously perched boulders because all of the scree under my feet was sliding downslope and I didn't want to go with it. The boulder, however, decided to join the moving scree and nearly took me with it, but, with some help from Keith, I managed to pull myself over the crest of the slope.

After resting for a bit and admiring Polar Bear Peak (6614), we traversed to the northeast down to the Organ Glacier and got onto the glacier. After Larry put his foot into a couple crevasses, we decided to rope up as one team and ascend the glacier. The sky was nearly cloudless and the temperature was warm. We could see the route above the bergschrund and we were becoming confident that Flute would finally allow us to summit. But the crux of the climb remained.

After crossing the bergschrund, we encountered a steep icy slope. Fortunately, Willy had suspected that this might be the case and we each came prepared with two climbing tools. Willy led us up four pitches of front pointing with running belays. We used ice screws as anchors. On this hot day we soon became tired and thirsty, but we were making progress and we were becoming confident that we would summit Flute. But, when we finally topped out onto the rocky ridge above the North Fork of Ship Creek, the crux of the climb remained.

We did some relatively easy scrambling to the west for a couple hundred feet and then topped out on a flat point overlooking the Flute Glacier. The summit of Flute Peak was about 80 feet above and immediately to the north of us. But the crux of the climb remained. I went up to the edge of the steep drop to the Flute Glacier and looked down. I couldn't see the bottom of the slope. I walked to the edge of the steep drop to the Organ Glacier and looked down. I couldn't see the bottom of the slope there, either. The climbing looked like typically rotten Chugach Crud scrambling and the exposure meant that a fall would be certain death. At this point, I decided to sit down and wait for the other three to climb the summit block and return. I had had enough of this peak. They contemplated roping the summit block and I gamely said that I would accompany them only if there were a rope, but I wouldn't encourage them to try. But, darn it, they did set a rope in and Larry led the climb to the summit and Keith followed. Well, with a rope set, I have significantly more courage, so I followed Keith. Willy followed me to the summit and soon we were taking photographs and signing into the register that Wayne Todd, Kathy Still, Steve Wilson, and Doug Zellmer had left on June 29, 2001. We were the only other party to sign in the register. Willy and I celebrated that we had finally climbed all 10 peaks in the South Fork of the Eagle River drainage and I celebrated having finally climbed all 29 peaks in the Ship Creek drainage. But several rappels remained.



We had to rappel off a large sling-wrapped boulder down the steep summit block to the staging area and then assemble our glacier gear for four rappels off ice screws on the hot day. We set off in the shade of the peak so that Willy's ice screws would have a better chance of staying put. After the third rappel, Keith and Larry decided to down-climb to the bergschrund. I waited for Willy so that we could rappel. While waiting for him, I heard the very distinctive sound of synthetic fabric sliding on ice. I looked down the glacier between my heels and saw Keith sliding, but there was nothing I could do but pray that he would avoid the bergschrund. He did and I was thankful. He enjoyed his experience enough that he conned Larry into duplicating it. He even tried to con me into following suit. But neither Willy nor I would have any of that.

Willy and I rappelled down to the bergschrund and hiked the remainder of the way down to Keith and Larry. We roped up and hiked down the glacier. At one point Keith put his leg into a crevasse, but he was able to pull it out and we continued on uneventfully. We retraced our steps and we reached camp just after midnight. Willy and I awoke at 8:30 the next morning and we set off for the trailhead by 10:00 a.m. Larry and Keith were still asleep, so we didn't wake them. We arrived at the trailhead uneventfully. But we still had some excitement in store for us.

As Willy was driving the Glenn Highway with his window down, a yellowjacket blew into his truck and bit him. He pulled off at the Fort Richardson exit and we engaged some quick, but fruitless, insect removal techniques. Personally, I think Mother Nature was seeking revenge for having finally thwarted her frustrating maneuvers. I certainly hope the remaining Eagle River drainage and Glacier Creek drainage peaks in my sights prove less frustrating than Flute Peak. Polar Bear Peak couldn't possibly be less frustrating. Or could it?

## Watchman

by Ross Noffsinger



he Watchman is a 6410-foot peak located just south of Lake Eklutna. Its most prominent feature is its northeast face that rises a very precipitous 5500 feet off the valley floor. Given its accessible location and spec-

tacular appearance, the peak has seen remarkably few ascents. In fact the first recorded ascent did not occur until 1989, while all of its neighbors were climbed more than 25 years prior. This apparent lack of interest may be due to a combination of factors such as the required bushwhack and river crossing. Low traffic may also be due in part to its neighbors, which include Bold, Bashful, The Mitre and Benign. Since these peaks are taller and more impressive in appearance, they draw more climbers. This appeared evident in the summit register that contained the following entries:

May 7, 1989:	Jim Sayler, Karen Cafmeyer, Phil Menke
September 2, 1997:	Richard Baranow, Wendy Sanem, Pouches
May 17, 1998:	Wayne Todd, Kathy Still, Lyle Haugsven
1999:	Sam

It would be safe to assume that these people (or at least the ones responsible for initiating the climb) had climbed most or all of the neighboring peaks prior to climbing The Watchman. In other words, The Watchman is overshadowed by its impressive neighbors.

Having surveyed virtually all aspects of the peak, the north ridge appeared to be the most obvious ascent route. This ridge forms a very aesthetic line, one guaranteed to provide spectacular hiking and scrambling. This was confirmed through discussions with Richard Baranow who provided good route information, the key piece of which is that technical gear is not required.

The climb begins with a bike ride around the lake to the 9-mile marker, followed by a crossing of the braided East and West Forks of the Eklutna River. Normally the crossing isn't bad, but high water resulting from recent precipitation or prolonged hot weather may be encountered. There is a faint trail along the north side of the creek flowing from the drainage between The Watchman and Thunder Bird Peak. This trail is used mostly by sheep hunters. Since the trail is overgrown, expect to thrash through devils club for the first quarter mile. I was picking thorns out of my legs for a week after the climb. Eventually the trail crosses the creek, climbs steeply up the bank and proceeds up the hillside through alder. This portion of the trail climbs through nearly 1500 vertical feet of thick brush and is in good condition. Needless to say it is very important that you do not miss the location where the trail splits off from the stream bed.





Once above the brush, the route up the ridge is obvious. As you ascend, you quickly notice the world falling away. The ridge is wide enough to comfortably walk, however a stumble could result in an out-of-control tumble. Since there are extensive networks cliffs along each side of the ridge, tumbling is not a good option.

At point 4120 the first big head wall in the ridge is encountered. At this point it is recommended to traverse onto the large bench along the west side of the ridge rather than scramble up the ridge proper. This bench can be followed for roughly three quarters of a mile and ends at around 4600 feet. At this point you can regain the ridge, topping out at roughly 5000 feet. It is not necessary to take this detour. David Stchyrba and I did not utilize it on the ascent. Since the detour avoids a lot of scrambling, it is consequently a lot faster and safer. We used it on the descent.

From 5000 feet to the summit, the climb involves a lot of exposed hiking and a few sections of scrambling. Of course the difficulty of this portion is condition dependent. We encountered a dusting of snow which made the rock slick and scrambling rather hairy. For the most part, we followed an amazing sheep trail that went to within 50 vertical feet of the summit where it split off the ridge, traversed the east face, and dropped around and down the south face cliff. I followed it for a ways along the south face looking for an easy route up the summit cone but did not find one. I abandoned the search when the effective width of the trail was reduced to inches by the outward bulging rock wall as it wrapped around an outside corner.

The final obstacle of the climb is a steeply pitched slab located right at the summit. Since it was covered by a slick inch of snow, we chose to avoid it by dropping down onto the east face cliff, following a crumbly ledge for 30 feet (or so), then scrambling up to the summit. Under dry conditions, I think I would try the slab.

We arrived on the summit at 3:30 p.m., 8 hours after leaving the parking lot. Of this we easily burned up 1.5 hours route finding. We hung out until 4:00 p.m., taking in the spectacular surroundings. Now that we were dialed in on the route, the descent went fast. The speed was in part due to the pending darkness. Also, hornets encountered in the devils club really helped expedite the bushwhack. I was stung once and David four times. One thing I discovered about bush-

whacking this summer is that you are a lot less likely to get stung when you are out in the lead, versus following someone else. I was stung only once this summer, while people following me received a combined total of 19 stings.

The north ridge of The Watchman is one of the more interesting and spectacular climbs I have done. The route presented some challenges and at times required a bit of persistence and nerve, but was not overwhelming. Of course this is a purely subjective statement.

## Hans' Hut

by Greg Bragiel



This was another epic journey to do hut maintenance. With a 5-day plan in mind, our team left the Eagle River Visitors' center at 9:00 a.m. on Saturday August 28th. Tom Choate, Boris Babaev, Nica Zlatkovski and I fully expected to take 1½ days to get into the hut to do some much overdue window installation. That night we camped on the gravel bar near the Crow Pass trail, and fully expected to be sitting in the hut by the same time the next day, enjoying the luxurious food supply that was waiting for us there. Two weeks prior to this Scott Mueller had very generously flown Stu Grenier, building supplies and plenty of food for our trip into Hans'. Stu was able to paint the front of the hut and get all the materials we needed in place for our planned maintenance trip.

We woke to another beautiful day Sunday and headed around Glacier Lake, turned left on the west side of Emerald Creek and began making our way up the ledges. At one point, we spotted a place where we could have easily crossed the Emerald gorge and continue on toward the toe of the Eagle Glacier with the possibility of ascending Blackout Pass via the two small glaciers just below it or continue into the Emerald drainage on its east side. However, we decided to stick to the original plan suggested by Stu and continue on the west side of Emerald Creek. At approximately 2000 feet, we ran out of ledges and elected to rope up for a short chimney climb led by Boris. Once on top the route looked simple enough. Just stay on the west side of the gorge and we should have an easy hike to the top into Emerald Valley! The next few hours involved some serious class 4 scrambling and uphill bushwhacking. By the time we entered Emerald



Valley it was nearly 6:00 p.m. and everyone agreed that it was time to stop for the day and regain some energy. After the tents were set up, Tom Choate and I did some exploring and discovered what appeared to be a snow marker along the creek about  $\frac{1}{3}$  mile from the falls. The marker pole was bent 90 degrees, probably by an avalanche. This was quite interesting and made us wonder who placed it there. We hiked to the falls area and enjoyed looking at the interesting rock formations and eating the bountiful blueberries. Everyone pooled their remaining food to prepare dinner.

Monday morning dawned cool and clear. As we headed up valley, we saw a black bear sow and cub in the distance and were able to alert them to our presence. After crossing Emerald Creek near the moraine we observed the same sow and cub heading our way again. Rolling some rocks down the slope scared the cub around the hill and eventually toward us with mom following. Once again we had to yell and make ourselves known before the bears decided not to take the same route we were on. Eventually we worked our way onto the main (southernmost) arm of the Emerald Glacier and remarked how different the glacier appeared compared to the IMUS map. There is a separation between the two arms of the glacier now and significant melt-back. With frequent lefts, rights, reversals, stops, reconnoitering and crevasse jumps, we worked our way over the moraine and onto the northernmost of the two passes to get an outstanding view of the Whiteout Glacier and a multitude of peaks in the area. The east side of the pass was a short scree scramble down. With Hans' site plainly in view, we slogged our way to the hut in 6-9 inches of fresh, wet snow, arriving at 6:00 p.m. Four hungry climbers attacked the food cache immediately. I got to work preparing well-deserved spaghetti with fish dinner while Tom, Boris and Nica occupied themselves with cutting holes in the south side of the hut in preparation for installation of two rectangular windows. Work continued well past dark.

Tuesday morning we busied ourselves with breakfast followed by more window installation, caulking and tidying up, and were quite pleased at our efforts. It was nice to sit in the hut and have plenty of light to see and read! With lunch in our bellies and a re-supply of provisions, we departed around 2:30 p.m. with thoughts of getting to Thunder Gorge campsite by dark. The team headed north on Whiteout Glacier, turned west, up and over the pass onto the northernmost Emerald Glacier, then headed down the glacier and climbed onto the Emerald ridge. With Tom Choate in the

lead we climbed the first point and followed the ridge westward, watching Tom walk gingerly in one very exposed area while the three of us crossed the same area 'au cheval.' There was certainly some huffing, puffing and pucker factor here! The group summited Emerald Peak around 9:10 p.m., read and signed the register, and Tom informed us this was the fifth recorded ascent. We began our descent into the dusk with hopes of following the ridge to the gorge. As darkness took over, our headlamps lit the way down. At some point around 3000 feet we found ourselves descending very steep, slick slopes and likely off route. The group then decided it was a bit too dangerous to continue with cliffs and such dangers. Bivouac being the choice, we used our ice axes to dig a sitting platform into the hill and wait until first light before continuing. We shared what little water we had left and found our circumstances somewhat hilarious. "Here we are on this steep slope, can't hardly stand up, can't lay down, no water, tie your backpack down so it doesn't roll downhill, sit down and try to get some sleep, not the first bivouac and not the last, gotta go to work Thursday..."

Wednesday dawned overcast and a bit rainy as we observed our position off the planned ridge route. We continued working our way downhill, around cliffs and through alders, getting to a much needed water source on a bench at about 2000 feet. Moose and bear trails proved a good route back to the ridge and finally down to the gorge. With the final 12 miles to go, we put on the after-burners and arrived back at the visitor's center at 5:00 p.m. Tom was in a big hurry to get home for a date with his wife and I "...gotta go to work tomorrow."

Satisfied that we accomplished our maintenance goal, the team agreed that if you are in a hurry, this route to Hans' Hut is definitely not recommended! Does anyone know if this route has been done previously? Tom reported that at the Fly By Night club that night, with Charlu, it was not so easy to stay awake!

Items still needed at the hut: screws of various sizes, broom head (screw on type), drill bits of various sizes.



## Where the Eagle and the Boogeyman Meet

by Stuart Grenier



When I envisioned this trip I wanted to go up Icicle Creek Valley, which is the route I used to summit Mt. Yukla a few years back in early July with Charles Sink. It is also an approach for

Kiliak. Many people had told me that the Icicle Creek route was more demanding than the Twin Falls route but because I had done it before and have always enjoyed Icicle Creek Valley I wanted to go anyway. Though I wasn't sure of it at the time this was the same route Art Davidson used for the first ascent exactly 40 years earlier in 1964. This late on such a hot summer, Icicle Creek Glacier proved to be a mistake that cost us the summit.

The 1964 team was Art Davidson and John Bousman. The article by John in the August 64 *Scree* called Yukla Peak, Kuluk Peak. Why he called it Kuluk when just nine months prior it was stated in the *Scree* that the mountain is called Yukla is very curious. This is interesting because when I talked about this article with Art Davidson recently he said that he was the one who had given Mt. Yukla its name. This is very interesting because Art explained how he went to Dan Alex, a well known Eklutna Native with a tape recorder and recorded some Denaina words. He gave these words English spellings as best he could and they became the names of some of our peaks. Some names that we know now are Korohusk Peak, Denaina for "welcome in." He chose this word because he felt it is an inviting one-day climb and because it is a feasible approach to Peak 7450. He chose the name Kiliak for Peak 7450, which means boogeyman. Next to Kiliak is Mt. Yukla, which means eagle. What is very surprising about this is that in 1898 when W.C. Mendenhall came through the area he documented the Native name for Eagle River as Yuklahitna. Hitna means river. Art Davidson was unaware of this fact until I mentioned it to him. Could it really be true that Art Davidson out of all the words he could have chosen to name Yukla stumbled by chance or fate on to what some believe is the original Denaina name for the river we now know as Eagle or is there another explanation?

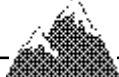
The Dictionary of Alaska Place Names and the December 1963 *Scree* both state that Mt Yukla was given its name because that was the original

name of Eagle River according to Mendenhall. This would suggest that Art didn't randomly select this name without knowledge of the river's original name but there is one other factor to consider. To increase the chances for the name to be accepted by the government it is likely that the head of the MCA Geographic Names Committee, Vin Hoeman, would have pointed out that it was also the original name of the river. So until someone digs up some files from the geographic names committee to show otherwise, maybe Art did give Mt. Yukla its name without knowledge of the river's original name.

Not concerned in the least who had named the mountain, four of us left July 13 for a three-day trip. We were John Maltas, John McCormick, Roger Clifford, and myself. Though there were no signs like freshly broken bushes, we hit the trail pretty much right on because I had been there three times before. Thick leather gloves are a good idea because they come in handy in clearing the (in your face) devil's club. Heat did become a factor. For about an hour and a half we slept under the shade of the alders waiting for the heat of the day to pass. We pulled into the usual camp spot near alder line at about 11:00 P.M.

We got a late start at 8:00 A.M. for what would be for me a 16-hour summit day. From our camp we had to do a quarter mile hike to a waterfall for water that was even farther away in the morning because the snow stopped melting at night. I suspect in a dry hot year late summer travelers to this area may have a clean water problem.

The route up to the Icicle Glacier led us under a great arch of ice. Probably fifty feet high with an eighty yard passage under it. Water was dripping off the ice ceiling. Roger and John took many pictures. We made it to the glacier where we put our crampons on and proceeded to go straight up the middle of the glacier as I had successfully done several times before. Unfortunately it was about two weeks later in the year than I than usual for me, and this year was the warmest summer to date. We hit massive crevasses that were very deep. Rather than backtrack and head up climbers' left of the glacier which is the late season route with an infamous rock fall problem, we accepted the crevasses' challenge and pulled out the ice screws, axes, and ropes. Moving in and out and up and down we managed to stay in the middle of the glacier until we came to a massive crevasse with a false bottom made of snow. We got in this crevasse and found the snow hard enough to be able



to use the false bottom as a sidewalk, sometimes belaying with the screws from the icy walls of the crevasse, we moved climber's right. We had to deal with a dubious bridge and some more belaying before we broke out of the icefall and got to where the glacier ice settled down and became flat. Unfortunately there were still large crevasses.

At this point the sun started to have its way with the cornices and snow bridges and things started to fall around us. The explosive pops were innervating for the team, especially when we realized that the bridges that we had crossed were softening up and possibly collapsing behind us, and that it required backtracking to go forward. We were not comfortable with the situation and all our belaying and route finding had eaten up a lot of time. After some debating we turned around and headed back to camp.

Lord Yukla once again dished out a lesson in humility. As we descended out of the valley where the eagle and the boogeyman meet, I could keenly feel the mountain's presence behind me and often looked over my shoulder at its sun-drenched summit. I felt only a deep admiration for this awesome mountain.

## First Degree Homicide

by David Stchyrba



With the steady decrease in daylight reducing quick hikes after work, I decided to make a run at Homicide Peak on August 12. I had been to Rabbit Lake several weeks prior and decided

that Homicide Peak should be on my to-do list for the summer.

The plan was to bike along Powerline Pass, summit and bike back within a 5 hour window to take advantage of the light. I recalled reading in the back of the B-Section of the Anchorage Daily News that the sun was setting around 10:40. With twilight, I figured that if I could make it back to the Glen Alps parking lot by 11:00 then 6:00 would be a decent starting time. This was my first mistake. Although I am a faithful reader of the ADN, I am not the most current. There is often 3 days to a week of unread newspaper stacked up in my living room. That isn't a problem for most of the summer, but when you are losing over 5 minutes a day near the end, the sun will appear to have short changed you by 30-40 minutes.

The bike ride down Powerline Pass was the usual lung busting grind where it seems that even the down hill segments are actually uphill in disguise. After an hour or so I made it to Green Lake, stashed the bike and hiked up to the Pass. From the Pass, I could make out what I thought were the summit and a rough trail leading to it. This would turn out to be the next mistake. I hopped across and up the scree until I reached the ridgeline. The ridge provided a great view of North Suicide, Avalanche Mountain and the peaks of the Bird Drainage. I started up what appeared to be a well-traveled gulley to reach what I thought was the summit. Victory was snatched from my grasp when I discovered that the true summit was much higher and on the other side of a yawning chasm.

After a few minutes of uttering expletives because I hadn't asked anyone about the route beforehand, I tried to visualize one. It involved heading all the way down towards North Suicide, around and then back up again. It would mean wasting valuable daylight and violating the mountaineering prime directive of never giving up hard earned elevation.

With discretion being the better part of valor, and the daylight starting to slip, I abandoned the idea of summiting and returned the way I came. Well, not exactly the same way. I have a bad habit of always trying to find a better way down when it comes to scrambling. It never works out but someday the scrapes and bruised shins will pay dividends. This particular hike turned out to be no exception. I felt a hint of pride that my rock climbing skills, although rusty, managed to get me back down. However, the numerous descents on my gluteus maximus offset this feeling.

I was soon back at the Pass and then Green Lake to retrieve my bike. As I started to head back, I realized that it would be dark a lot earlier than I had expected. My mind raced back to the stack of newspapers in my living room and wondered in what order they had been placed.

The ride back was much quicker than the ride in. I had brought along a headlamp but figured that it would be of limited use at gravity assisted speeds. Besides, I was more concerned with meeting 1000 lb. four-legged friends than going end over end. I was making good time when I rounded a corner and saw a moose calf on the trail several hundred feet away. I came to a screeching halt that generated enough noise to announce myself. The calf jumped a bit but remained on the





trail. Seeing Alaskan wildlife fills the mind with many questions. "How old is it? Is it male or female? Will it survive the winter? How can it walk on those legs? Where is its mother?" Actually that last question was the first one that crossed my mind. I immediately looked up the hill to my left and saw mom stuffing her face on some greenery. She either did not see me or was not concerned. Given my loud entrance she had to know that I was there, so I took some comfort in knowing that she probably wasn't concerned. Taking no chances, I decided to retreat towards some alders to avoid her line of sight and the calf on the trail. I managed to move down and around the calf, stepping into every hidden water puddle along the way.

I made my way back up to the trail with no moose in sight. As I was peddling along, it occurred to me that I should be careful at the blind corners since it was well into twilight. I had just finished this thought when I rounded a blind corner and surprised a mother and calf standing just above the trail. The calf turned and ran while the mother just stared at me with a look that equaled the surprise on my face. It seemed like I was close enough to scratch her chin. You would think that at that proximity, I could have told you if her ears were up or back but all I remember thinking was "peddle faster!" Luckily, the whole encounter was over in a few seconds and the moose decided that I wasn't worth chasing. I'd like to think that the previous moose had sent word ahead that I wasn't a threat, but I don't know for certain. I haven't heard of any Fish and Game study correlating moose and cell phones.

I made it back to my car and loaded up my bike with the disappearance of twilight. I was disappointed for not being able to summit but feeling of not getting stomped provided a sense of accomplishment.

A few weeks later on a sunny day, I returned and summited without incident. I think that Homicide Peak was given that name because it can be murder to get there and back.

## From Bleak to Bright

by Steve Gruhn



Ross Noffsinger and I arrived at the Eklutna Lake trailhead early on Sunday, July 25, and set out on foot down the Eklutna Lakeside Trail for the Bold Ridge Trail. The skies were clear, but it was early enough that it was still cool. We had hoped to be in the

Bold Valley by the time the sunlight reached us. We weren't entirely successful, but we made pretty good time.

We left the Bold Ridge Trail at about 3300 feet and headed east, crossing Bold Creek and ascending the opposite ridge to a notch at about 3950. The vegetation wasn't too thick to impede our progress, but I kept getting waylaid by blueberries. Once atop the ridge, Ross and I angled down to Sdaylent Creek with Ross' dog, Katmai, roaming back and forth way out in front of us. Sometimes I think it would be really neat to have the energy of a dog.

After crossing the creek, we headed up a dry creek bed between Bleak Peak (5430 Sec. 9, T15N, R3E) and Bright Peak (5745, Sec. 15, T15N, R3E). At about 4100 feet we began to ascend the ridge to the west of the valley. The sun was baking us and the heat combined with the steep hiking made for frequent stops. We eventually topped out onto the broad summit of Bleak. Ross remarked that this is one of the broadest summits in the Chugach. It certainly was different than what I have become accustomed to.

We had a bite to eat and then we were off, setting our sights on Bright Peak's west ridge. After hiking up the ridge to about 5150 feet, I began having second thoughts about our route, so we opted to descend down the scree slope to the valley below. We hiked down the valley and gained the southwest ridge of Bright Peak. In the process, we scared some rams, who dislodged scree onto our route as they fled onto the ridge. These were some of the few sheep I have seen in the Chugach Mountains this summer. I suspect that last winter's snowfall was tough on the sheep.

Once on the ridge, we followed it up until we were able to traverse eastward to a south-trending gully. This steep gully forked near the top. To avoid rockfall, Ross went left; I went right. Once we topped out, a gentle slope rose above us. At the top of the gentle slope was a sheep trail



that followed the ridge to the summit. On top we rested and ate some more. Soon, though, it was time to descend.

We followed the ridge to the broad slope and then followed sheep trails along the ridge toward Point 5281 north of Hunter Creek Pass. Ross followed the ridge crest and, being slower than him, I followed the sheep trails that skirted the high points. We met up again in the valley above Bold Creek and stopped for a drink at a small, but gorgeous pond that seemed to be the source of Bold Creek.

We hiked in the general direction of the Bold Ridge Trail and picked up a small trail that took us right to the main trail. Here we had our first sighting of other people on our trip. The hike down the trail to Eklutna Lake was short and uneventful. On the hike back to the trailhead we savored memories of a fine day in the mountains. And we were able to share our experiences with Willy Hersman who stopped to talk with us while biking back to the trailhead from the Eklutna Glacier.

Our legs were tired, but our spirits were high and we felt renewed. A day in the Western Chugach Mountains can make even the bleak seem bright.

### ADZE

#### For Sale

Wiggy's -60 degree rated sleeping bag. Only used for one Denali trip. \$125. 11 ft River Kayak. \$100.  
Jeff or Felicia Mohr 622-5834

#### For Sale

La Sportiva Makalu Mountain-eering/Hiking boots. size 42 1/2. Used only twice in the summer, I found I bought these boots a size too small. Perhaps they will fit you! They are wonderful boots. Use them for hiking the Chugach. Use them for ice climbing. \$125 .  
Matt 278-3648

#### For Sale

Grivel Rambo 2 Ice Tools, \$220 for set.  
Phone 338-6492

## WEB CHAT



extremeironing.com:

Ever since a couple of British climbers claimed the world extreme ironing altitude record by pressing a garment on the Weissmeis in Switzerland, there have been a wave of ironists claiming extreme ironing records. Whilst the Extreme Ironing Board is a fairly laid back organization, we have had to put together a few "rules" before we can verify an "official" new record.

**Board size:** A miniature board is ok (although we prefer to see full sized boards wherever possible). However, it can't be one of those tiny boards. It needs to be at least 1 meter long, 30 centimeters at the widest point and have legs.

**Irons:** No plastic toys irons, they must be real irons. Travel irons are fine.

**Garment:** Any garment is suitable, but it must be at least the size of a tea towel. It's hardly impressive to iron a handkerchief.

**Ironing:** There must be visual proof of ironing (a photo or video clip) and it should be at a recognizable and verifiable landmark. For example, there's enough pictures of the top of Everest to verify it.

**Type of record:** We've had people ironing near the top of Everest (height) and through the Blue Hole off the Egyptian coast (depth) but there's still plenty of records to go for yet. We'll leave it to your imagination...

#### Question:

Are there any basejumpers extreme ironing? I'm prepared to jump with an iron but ill be blown if I'm jumping with the board as well. Also, where can I get a light weight battery powered iron...

You could take a small board without legs. Or strap one to your feet? As far as the iron goes, you could get one heated by mains electricity or by gas and iron quickly before it goes cold. It's not like you're going to have time to perfect your collars and cuffs is it?

I don't know about you, but I'm not really prepared for this new sport. Consider this: your trips become ironic events, you get called Iron Man, the equipment, or irony, if you bought the light weight stuff, could take you to the cleaners. Then if a spin-off of the club were to form, there would be all those Board meetings, everyone gabbing and ironing out their differences. And the steamy articles in the Free Press, gawd. Of course there would be the obligatory trip to Boulder to climb the Flat-irons, which would be ok. But hey, I happen to like my wrinkly pants and shirts, they have character.

Still, after having done such-and-such peak several times, there could be new incentive to go back again. Strange. I feel an urge to iron something on Flattop, to the tune of In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida, perhaps.

Press On,  
Editor



## MCA Trip Classifications

The classifications below do not take into account individual trip hazards such as river crossings, scree slopes, snow fields, bears, etc. Trip leaders are required to inform the trip participants of any such hazards either verbally, on the sign-up sheet, or in the trip description. Leader approval is required for participation on all trips.

**NON-TECHNICAL:** Following are a few standards used to classify non-technical trips. The classification is made in terms of hiking distance and altitude gain. Many trips are not on established trails.

**CLASS A:** Easy hikes with a maximum distance of 8 miles for day trips or 4 miles per day for overnight trips. Altitude gain up to 1200 feet.

**CLASS B:** Trips involving a maximum distance of up to 12 miles for a day trip or 6 miles per day for an overnight trip. Altitude gain of 1200 to 2500 feet.

**CLASS C:** Trips up to 15 miles for a day hike or 8 miles per day for an overnight trip. Altitude gain up to 3500 feet. Scree, steep grass or other rough terrain problems may be encountered.

**CLASS D:** Hikes and climbs with an altitude gain of over 3500 feet or a distance of greater than 15 miles for a day-hike or greater than 8 miles a day for an overnight trip. Peaks in this classification may require minimal climbing skills.

**CLASS E:** Hazardous climbing conditions or stream-crossing conditions may be encountered. A basic mountaineering course may be required.

**TECHNICAL:** Technical trips are open to all qualified climbers. However, the registration on any particular trip must be restricted to a safe and manageable number of climbers. Registration is made directly with the leader, who determines the qualifications needed for the trip.

**GLACIER TRAVEL:** Trips requiring roped travel over glaciers. Knowledge of crevasse rescue, and ice axe and crampon skills are required. Basic understanding of ice and snow anchors also required.

**FIFTH CLASS:** Trips which involve fifth class climbing. A Basic Mountaineering course or equivalent is required. Knowledge of belay and rappel techniques and placing anchors is required. Climbing difficulty varies widely with each trip.

**TRIP PARTICIPANTS** have the obligation to acquaint themselves with the nature of the trip and to verify that it is within their capability and experience. Anyone wishing to participate in any trip above CLASS A must have completed one or more trips of the next lower classification, or the equivalent.

Approved: MCA Board, February 15, 2000

## General Rules for MCA Sanctioned Trips

1. Proper equipment is available from the trip leader.
2. No dogs. (Among the reasons are bear problems.)
3. The trip leader can require special equipment and refuse participation to any person that is ill-prepared (e.g. inappropriate clothing/gear).
4. The leader's suggestions are to be followed. Do not go off alone, return or rush ahead without his (her) permission, and don't ford a stream before the leader assesses the situation. Remember, this is a club trip and the leader must know where all participants are. Anyone separating from the group without the leader's approval is no longer considered a participant the MCA Sanctioned trip.
5. The trip leader has the authority to split the group (fast and slow), dependent upon current conditions. However, he/she must appoint a qualified co-leader to lead the second group using the guidelines specified in the current Trip Leader Responsibilities.
6. Trip participants who, in the leader's opinion, put themselves or other members of the group in danger by disregarding the leader's suggestions, shall be subject to sanction by the club. Sanctions may include, but are not limited to, reprimand at general meeting, exclusion from future trips, termination of annual membership, or lifetime exclusion from the club.
7. You must sign up on a trip roster (club meetings) or contact the leader, and you must have signed the club waiver to be on a club trip.
8. If you find you cannot participate after signing up on the roster, please let the leader know, both for transportation and gear-planning and so someone else can go. If you are the leader, help find a replacement.
9. Total number of people on club trips:
  - Minimum: 4 (for safety reasons)
  - Maximum: Leader option, depends upon the trail and campsite conditions, but generally limited to 12 in trail-less areas or State/ National Parks
10. Firearms are not encouraged, and please let the leader know if you want to carry one - it will be leader's option. Aerosol bear repellent is preferred.

Approved: MCA Board, February 15, 2000



# Mountaineering Club of Alaska

## *Officers*

President	Jayme Mack	694-1500
Vice-President	Carl Battreall	258-0075
Secretary	Dave Hart	263-7672
Treasurer	Steve Gruhn	344-1219

## *Board*

Randy Howell	346-4608
Sean Bolender	333-0213
Hans Neidig	357-2026
Matt Nedom	278-3648
Richard Baranow	694-1500

**Annual membership dues: Single \$10.00 Family \$15.00 (one *Scree* per family)**

Dues can be paid at any meeting or mailed to the treasurer at the MCA address below. If you want a membership card, please fill out a club waiver and mail it with a self-addressed, stamped envelope. If you fail to receive the newsletter, or have questions about your membership, contact the club treasurer. The post office does not forward the newsletter.

*SCREE* is a monthly publication of the Mountaineering Club of Alaska. Articles and notes submitted for publication and other communication related to the newsletter should be mailed to Scree Editor Box 102037 Anchorage, AK 99510, or e-mailed to [jaymack@alaska.net](mailto:jaymack@alaska.net). Articles should be received by October 29th to be included in the November issue. Sorry, no exceptions.

Paid ads may be submitted to the attention of the Vice-President at the club address and should be "camera ready" and pre-paid. Your cooperation will be appreciated... Willy Hersman, Temp. Editor.

Missing your MCA membership card? If so, stop by one of our monthly meetings to pick it up or send us a self-addressed stamped envelope and we'll mail it to you.

MAILING LIST/DATABASE ENTRY: don smith

HIKING/CLIMBING CHAIR: matt nedom, 278-3648, richard baranow, 694-1500

HUTS: hans neidig, 357-2026

WEB: [www.mcak.org](http://www.mcak.org) (go here to change your address)

MAILING LIST SERVICE: [mcak@yahoogroups.com](mailto:mcak@yahoogroups.com)